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Show Me Agriculture

George Washington Carver – Agricultural Researcher

George Washington Carver was born on a southwest Missouri farm in the spring of 1864 to Mary, a slave, owned by Moses and Susan Carver. Mary was a good friend to Susan. George had an older brother named Jim. When George was just a few months old Bushwhackers came to the Carver farm. Mr. and Mrs. Carver and Jim hid but George and his mother were kidnapped and taken into Arkansas. Moses Carver was concerned about Mary and baby George. A Union scout named John Bentley traced the kidnappers and returned George to Mr. Carver but he never found Mary. Mr. Carver paid him by giving him his best horse.

George was a weak child and was cared for by Mr. and Mrs. Carver as if he were their own son. From a very young age, George was very interested in learning about plants and rocks. He spent many hours in the woods near his home west of Diamond, Missouri. It was there that he had a secret garden where he cared for his favorite plants. George was eager to have an education. He left the Carver's home at the age of 12 so that he could live with another family and go to school. As George grew up, he also lived in Kansas and Iowa. By the age of 31, he had completed a Master's degree in Agriculture.

Professor Carver then became a famous agriculture teacher. He soon moved to Alabama where he completed research on new uses for agricultural products. During his career, he is best known for

developing nearly 325 products from peanuts (such as peanut butter) and over 100 products from sweet potatoes. He also worked on new uses for soybeans and pecans which are now both important Missouri agricultural crops. Some of the soybean products that he invented were: soybean oil, soybean flour, paints and stains, and even soy milk. He also worked with Henry Ford to develop plastics from soybeans that could be used in place of steel when manufacturing automobiles.

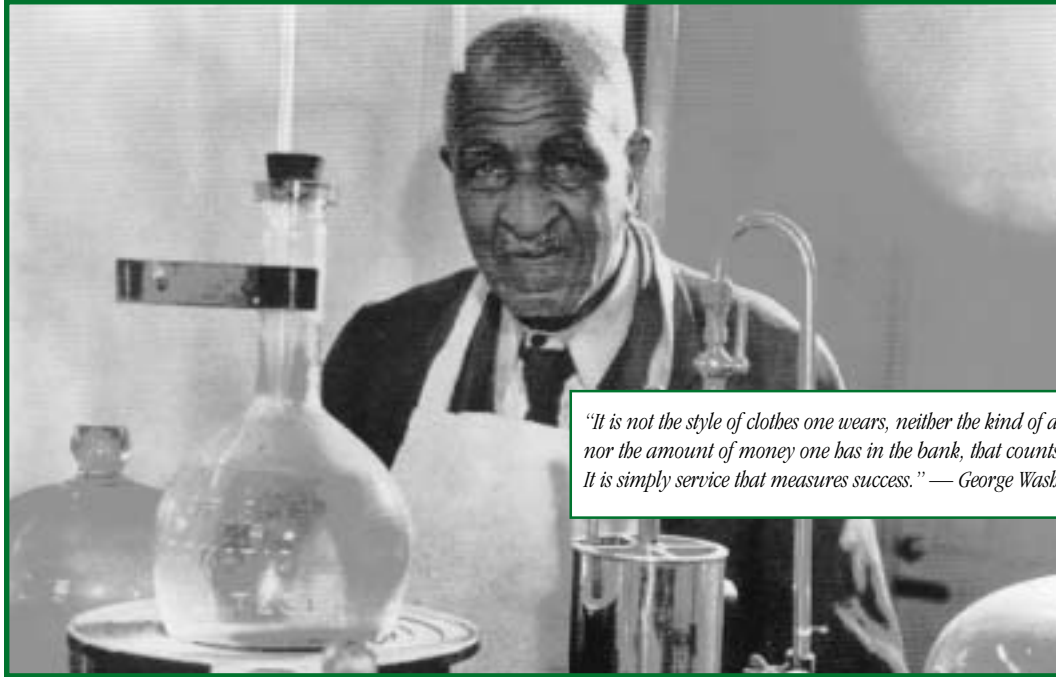
While Professor Carver was still in Iowa, he was a friend of a six-year old boy named Henry Wallace. Henry followed him through the woods and was as eager to learn about plants as Professor Carver had been at that age. Henry grew up to become famous by developing improved varieties of corn. He also became the Secretary of Agriculture and Vice President of the United States.

Professor Carver taught that it was important to use waste products instead of throwing them away. He demonstrated how to compost. Composting is a process where unwanted plant parts (leaves and stems) are allowed to break down. The compost material can be added to soil to improve fertility.

Professor Carver's agricultural research was important to so many Americans that his birthplace has been preserved as a national park. The George Washington Carver National Monument is located in Newton County, in southwest Missouri.



George Washington Carver



"It is not the style of clothes one wears, neither the kind of automobile one drives, nor the amount of money one has in the bank, that counts. These mean nothing. It is simply service that measures success." — George Washington Carver

Photo courtesy of George Washington Carver National Monument



On the map above, mark places where George Washington Carver lived by writing the number of each place on the map.

1. Diamond, Newton County, Missouri, where George was born (the Missouri map on page 4 may be helpful in locating Newton County.)
2. Ft. Scott, Kansas where George went to school
3. Ames, Iowa, where George went to college and started teaching
4. Tuskegee, Alabama, where Professor Carver taught for over 40 years

Look at a Missouri road map and calculate how far your school is from Diamond, Missouri.